

VZCZCXR07244
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDIR RUEHKUK
DE RUEHKU #0781/01 1361447
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 161447Z MAY 07
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9138
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000781

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/IR AND NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/16/2022

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IR](#) [KU](#) [KUWAIT](#) [IRAN](#) [RELATIONS](#)

SUBJECT: FOREIGN AFFAIRS CHAIRMAN ON RECENT VISIT TO IRAN,
KUWAITI POLITICS

REF: KUWAIT 775

Classified By: Political Counselor Donald Blome for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: On May 13, Foreign Affairs Chairman and Inter-Arab Parliament (IAP) Speaker Mohammed Al-Sager gave PolOffs a read-out of his recent visit to Iran. Al-Sager said Iranian officials he met, including Rafsanjani, asked for Kuwaiti mediation with the U.S. and called on Kuwait to play a more active role in Iraq. They also expressed interest in attending a meeting in Kuwait this summer organized by the IAP to discuss Arab-Iranian issues, and suggested including "the foreign military presence in the region" and "the name of the Gulf" (i.e. Persian vs. Arab) among the discussion topics. Recounting one Iranian journalist's open criticism of Ahmadinejad, Al-Sager said he could "feel the strain" in Iran and claimed the Iranians were increasingly worried. He predicted the Iranians would eventually back down on the nuclear issue. On Kuwaiti domestic politics, Al-Sager argued that some Islamist MPs were intentionally stoking fears of a U.S.-Iran conflict for political purposes. He reported that the Government presented "nothing spectacular" during its May 9 briefing to the Foreign Affairs Committee on Kuwait's contingency planning for a possible U.S.-Iran war. Al-Sager believed the Prime Minister was "at the peak of his strength," but nonetheless predicted the Minister of Justice/Awqaf would be forced out of the Cabinet by Salafi opponents during the summer. End summary.

¶2. (C) PolOffs met May 13 with MP Mohammed Jassem Al-Sager, the Chairman of Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee and the Speaker of the Inter-Arab Parliament (IAP), a body formed under the auspices of the Arab League in 2005. Al-Sager visited Iran May 6-7 and met with former president Hashemi Rafsanjani, Expediency Council Secretary Mohsen Rezai, Majlis Speaker Gholam Ali Haddad Adel, and Chairman of the Majlis' Foreign Affairs Committee Aladdin Boroujerdi, and several Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials. He said Iranian officials expressed an interest in attending an Arab-Iranian dialogue meeting organized by the IAP in Kuwait later this summer. Al-Sager claimed the Foreign Ministers of Egypt and Saudi Arabia; former Iraqi Prime Ministers Iyad Allawi and Ibrahim Al-Jaafari; and Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa had already agreed to attend.

¶3. (C) The discussions will cover a wide range of issues related to regional security, including Iran's nuclear program. Al-Sager said Iranian officials also wanted to discuss "the foreign military presence in the region," but he warned them that Arab leaders might respond by raising Iran's presence in Iraq and other countries. The Iranians, however, denied that they had a military presence in Iraq. The Iranians also wanted to discuss "the name of the Gulf" (i.e. Persian or Arab), a suggestion Al-Sager told them would also

cause controversy.

Iranians Feeling the Strain

¶4. (C) Although in Iran less than 48 hours, Al-Sager said he could "feel the strain." He recounted how one Iranian journalist he spoke to had openly criticized President Ahmadinejad in the lobby of their hotel, clearly unconcerned that others could overhear him. Al-Sager took this as an indication of growing frustration with Ahmadinejad's policies. Iranian officials told Al-Sager they wanted Kuwait to mediate between them and the U.S. and to play a more active role in resolving problems in Iraq. He believed the Iranians felt more comfortable with Kuwait than with the Saudi Arabia due to Kuwait's strategic location and the historically good ties between the two countries. Iranian officials also lobbied for more Kuwaiti investment in Iran, whose economic problems Al-Sager claimed were becoming increasingly severe, particularly the lack of investment in oil infrastructure. Despite tensions over the nuclear program, Al-Sager believed the Iranians knew "the limits of the game" and would eventually back down. "They are shrewd negotiators, but very pragmatic and smart," he argued.

Islamists Stoking Political Fires

¶5. (C) Al-Sager said the Government presented "nothing spectacular" in its May 9 briefing to the Foreign Affairs Committee on Kuwait's preparedness in the event of a U.S.-Iran conflict. He criticized some Islamist MPs for stoking fears of such a conflict for political gains and claimed most MPs did not believe a conflict was likely.

KUWAIT 00000781 002 OF 002

Al-Sager argued that cooperation between the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM), the political arm of the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood, and the National Islamic Alliance (NIA), a hardline, Iran-leaning Shi'a political association, was "not surprising." He claimed this "strategic partnership" was motivated by similar views on Hizballah, Hamas, and Israel. (Comment: The ICM participated in a recent Islamic Brotherhood Conference hosted by NIA, which featured representatives from Iran, Hizballah, and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. The ICM has participated in such conferences before. One ICM official told PolOff it would be politically difficult for the ICM not to attend a conference on "Islamic unity." End comment.)

¶6. (C) Al-Sager predicted Minister of Justice/Awqaf Abdullah Al-Maatouq would be forced out of the Cabinet in the summer. He explained that the Minister had infuriated Salafis by reducing their influence within the two ministries (reftel). Despite pressure on his government, Al-Sager argued that the Prime Minister was "at the peak of his strength" and did not face any serious challenges. Al-Sager suggested a new tax law and Project Kuwait, an \$8.5 billion project to develop Kuwait's northern oil fields, could be passed in the near future.

For more reporting from Embassy Kuwait, visit:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/?cable s>

Visit Kuwait's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/>

LeBaron